

cation, she sometimes took it into her head to pilfer a little on her own account, and among others who suffered by her depredations, was the master. Between the school hours he always opened the windows to ventilate the room; and Maggy, as often as she could, availed herself of the opportunity to steal the boys' pens. It happened, however, that she went once too often, and was caught in the fact, with a new pen in her neb.

The master's own kindly humour induced him to pardon the bird; but as quarrels had arisen among the boys, occasioned by the loss of their pens, one accusing the other of the theft, he deemed it incumbent on him to rebuke the owner of the depredator. Accordingly, when the school assembled in the afternoon, he proclaimed silence; and taking up Maggy from under a basket where he had imprisoned her, he addressed the boys to the following effect:—

"Wha' amang you is guilty of keeping this misleart and unprincipled pyet, which is in the practice, whenever I leave the windows open to air the school, of coming in and stealing the pens from off the desks—carrying them awa' in its neb, without ony regard for the consequence?"

"It's mine," cried Andrew.

"Yours!" said the master; "then Wheelie, come ye here, for I maun point out to you the great error of such conduct. It is, as ye maun surely hae often heard, an auld and a true saying, that 'they wha begin wi' stealing needles and prins, may end wi' horned knout.' I'm no saying, so ye needna nicher, that ever this pyet will steal either horse or black cattle; but I would exhort you, nevertheless, to put it away, for it is a wicked bird, and may, by its pranks, entice you to do evil yoursel.' I dinna, however, recommend that ye should put the poor creature to death—that would be a cruelty; and, besides, ye ken it's but a feathered fowl, and no endowed wi' ony natural understanding of good and evil. It kens nae better, like the other beasts that perish, than to mak its living in a dishonest manner. Therefore, I counsel you just to take it to the woods, and set it at liberty, where it may fall out in some other's hand."

To this Andrew replied, with one of his pawkie glances, "It's but the first fault o' poor Maggy, master, and ye shouldna be